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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed gender bias in dialogues as presented in three recent, popular textbooks designed for early intermediate or intermediate English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instruction. Analysis focused on dialogues intended for practice in speaking. For each textbook, data were gathered on: different male and female character types; number and average number of appearances of each characters; number of mixed-sex dialogues initiated by males and females; male and female turns; average turns per character and character type; and number and average number of dialogue words spoken by males and females and by male and female character types. Results suggest that the authors and publishers gave consideration to social roles, language use, and gender and did not fall into patterns indicating gender bias. Characteristics of ideally gender-balanced instructional materials are also discussed. Further research in this area and in gender bias in the classroom is recommended. Contains 35 references. (MSE)

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Discourse Roles, Gender and Language Textbook Dialogues: Who Learns What from John and Sally?

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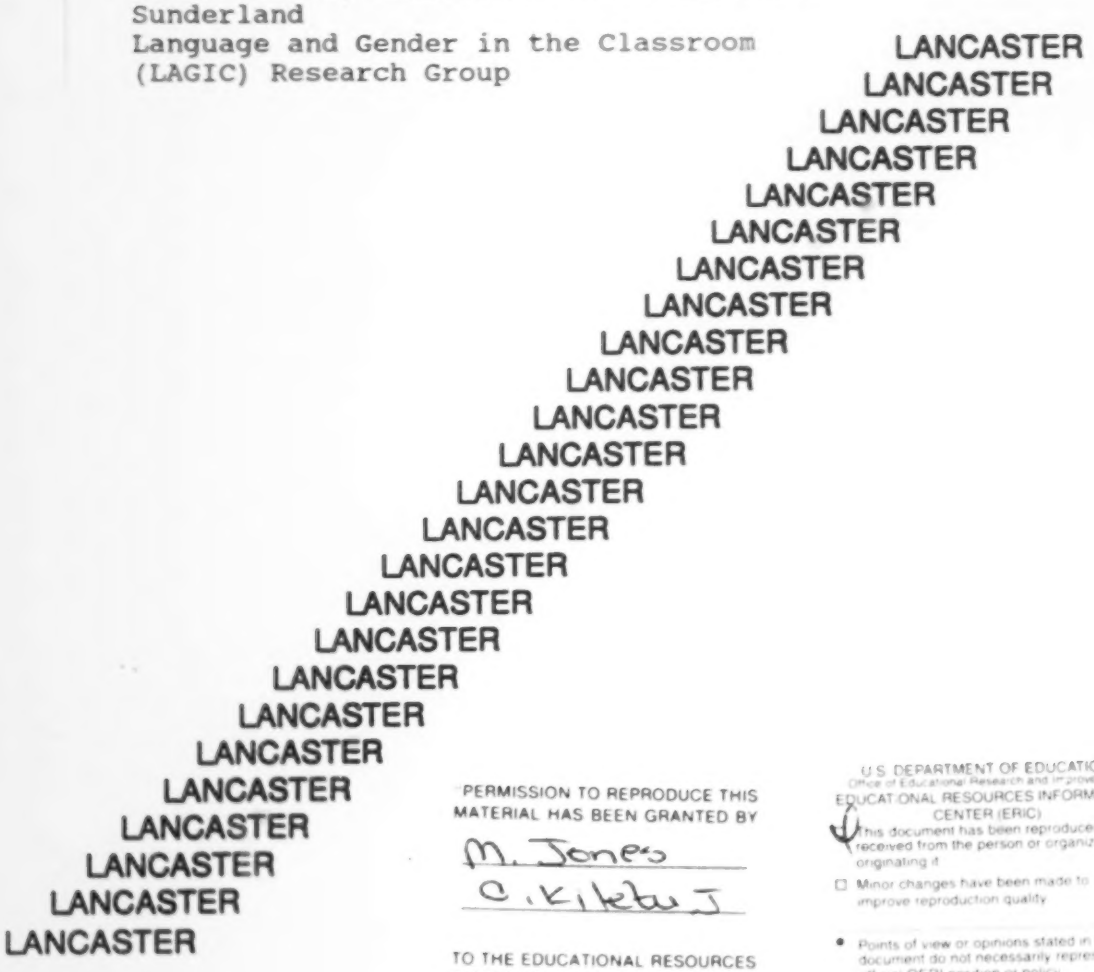

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Discourse Roles, Gender and Language Textbook Dialogues: Who Learns What from John and Sally?

> When studying French in a 'Languages for All' course at Lancaster University, in a dialogue Alison played a female tourist. Two men played a male tourist and a guide. Alison said 'Qu'est-ce-que c'est?' , seven times, and 'Quoi par exemple?' and 'Oh, allons-y, allons-y!' , once each. The guide informed the tourists about various points of interest in Paris, and Alison's male companion asked a range of informed questions. Alison was not impressed[1]

A large number of studies has now been done into gender bias in language textbooks, especially that in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks (e.g. Hillary Rees-Parnell, 1976; Pat Hartman and Elliot Judd, 1978; Marlis Hellinger, 1980; Karen Porecca, 1984; Sandra Talansky, 1986). The results have been depressing: gender bias is rife in terms of both relative visibility and occupational and personal stereotyping of female characters.

None of the above studies was carried out this decade, and it would be nice to think the situation had improved. Meta-analyses of the findings of studies carried out in each of the seventies, eighties and (hypothetically) the nineties just might provide grounds for hope. But even carrying out such further investigations may be to miss the point. The studies referred to above all found many manifestations of sexism and, correctly, condemned them. What they did not do (or did only in a very token, superficial or unsubstantiated fashion) was attempt to relate this gender bias to *learning*, or even learning *opportunities*. Yet it is essential to do this. Those teachers who embrace a philosophy of *vive la difference*, or who view gender issues as trivial or misguided, or at best peripheral, will only be convinced that they must actually **respond** to gender bias if they believe it has the potential to affect their students' learning opportunities - and, thus, their actual learning.

It is of course rarely possible to demonstrate a connection between learning and a gender-biased text, only to suggest a hypothetical one. In an (unpublished) study of gender bias by 'Women in EFL Materials' (a subgroup of 'Women in TEFL'), the example from *Streamline Departures* (1978) of the young woman in the short skirt and the male student who crashes his car because he is looking at her was the target of several accusations of sexism in terms of the

lasciviousness of the illustrations and (more arguably) because the young woman is somehow positioned as being to blame for the crash. Yet it is hard to identify exactly how such a text with its visuals can actually *hinder* girls' and women's language learning. It is easy to say that female learners will be alienated and hence demotivated by such a portrayal of women. Some indeed might be: we have rather found that, either despite or because of its sexism, the *Streamline* series is usually a great success with learners of both sexes, many of whom see the books as having the capacity to improve their oral fluency.

Complaints about many older textbooks tended to be not so much that women were sex objects but that they were over-contented homemakers. Writing on ESL textbooks for adult learners in the USA, Fairlee Winfield Carroll notes

> Adult women attending foreign language classes are ... there because the language is necessary to them for career advancement, university studies or to make homes and find employment in a second language environment....When many single and married women are part of the labor force, seeking to enter it, or acquiring foreign language skills to improve their potentials, it is unjust to portray only housewives and future housewives in textbooks (1978: 55, 59).

Indeed it is - but again such portrayals may adversely affect these women's learning, or they may not.

The writers of *On Balance* (1991), the guidelines for the representation of women and men for British publishers of EFL books, observe

> The images and language which are used in teaching, and the extent to which learners can identify with them, have an important effect on how well people learn. If women are under-represented in teaching materials, or represented in demeaning ways, the women who are taught with these materials may learn less well.

Again, the key word is *may*.

Winfield Carroll and the *On Balance* writers can only speculate about the cognitive effects of sexist texts for two (related) reasons (there may be others). One is that people do not respond in the same way to what may be considered a 'sexist' text. A reader's interpretation of a text cannot be predicted, regardless of the writer's intentions or even the content of the text itself. A learner-reader, far from unconsciously absorbing what many consider gender-stereotypical images, may well *contest* the sexism in a text and resist any positioning of herself as a contented homemaker or someone concerned only with her

hairstyle and boyfriends - and having done so may take what she can from the book in terms of the learning opportunities it offers. Alternatively, what is a repressive text to one female student may in fact be a progressive one to another, for example one who lives in a country where the subordination of women is institutionalised. All this, of course, highlights the major limitation of content analysis of a language textbook (or indeed of any other text): as Sara Mills (1995: 14, 15) notes, content analysis is essentially static and does not allow for different interpretations; it may be valuable, but needs to be done alongside a more dynamic and essentially wider discourse analysis.

A second reason why cognitive effects can at best be suggested is that what happens to a text in class is unpredictable from what it looks like on a page of an unopened book on the teacher's desk or school storecupboard. When she uses the text the teacher may give it a meaning completely different from that intended by the writer. An apparently sexist text can be addressed critically by the teacher and/or learners; by the same token, a progressive, egalitarian one can be interpreted by a conservative teacher in non-progressive ways.

For these two reasons alone it is thus impossible to do more than *speculate* about the effect of gender bias in a textbook on students' language learning. The relationship between learning *opportunities*, or at least practice opportunities, and gender bias in the textbook may however merit stronger claims, as we attempt to show below in relation to textbook dialogues.

Textbook Dialogues

One 'genre' of a language textbook for which it is possible to hypothesise actual *uses* in the classroom is the *dialogue*, i.e. a written or taped conversation between two or more people. Among other ways, a dialogue can be used:

(a) as an 'oral model', to be demonstrated by two or more students and listened to by other class members
(b) as a basis for oral pair- or groupwork for the whole class, to be 'parroted' and/or adapted or extended through such activities as role play, simulation or dramatisation
(c) as a model in the textbook which can be extended by the students in writing
(d) as a model to be read silently in the textbook, or listened to on tape
(e) for the oral completion of a gapped conversation (e.g. in a language laboratory, where dialogues can be used by individual students)

These ways can be used alone or in combination.

The literature on textbook dialogues suggests they play a threefold role in the teaching/learning process. First, dialogues help in developing *knowledge* of the language being learnt on the level of vocabulary, structure and language use (see Tricia Hedge, 1985): J. Dobson (1975) points out also that in dialogues, pupils become aware of aspects of pronunciation, and particular features of spontaneous speech such as rejoinders, fillers and interjections.

Secondly, dialogues provide a social context in which to practise new language. Students thus get a framework in which to practise discourse (Dobson, 1975).

Thirdly (and this applies to uses a, b and e), dialogues are a means of actually *practising* conversational speech, particularly colloquial expressions, speed, intonation, and use of pragmatics. By being given practice in speaking dialogues, pupils thus develop a range of conversational skills (see Wilga Rivers, 1981; Wilga Rivers and Mary S. Temperly 1978; Neville Grant 1987).

Gender Imbalance in Textbook Dialogues

It would thus appear that dialogues are of considerable potential value in providing different types of language learning opportunities. But does gender imbalance exist in textbook dialogues as it appears to do in language textbooks in general, and if so what form does it take?

Very few investigations of gender bias in EFL materials have in fact looked at the ways in which the male and female characters in their dialogues use language in dialogues differently, either qualitatively or quantitatively. An early exception is the now disbanded 'ETHEL' (a newsletter and the name of a group of feminist EFL teachers working in Italy), who in 1980 analysed several units of *Network* (1980), and noted that in addition to gender variation with age, body language, actions, jobs and clothes, men in dialogues asked about other people's likes and habits and described their own, whereas women only asked about other people's, and only men gave orders (to women). More recently Sophia Poulou (1994) examined two different textbooks used for teaching Greek as a foreign language to adults. In both books, in mixed-sex dialogues with which both speakers were 'non-experts', she found a tendency

for women to ask for information, men to provide it. And in one of the books the majority of expressive language was used by the women (in the other, little was used by either).

Quantitatively, ETHEL claimed that all dialogues in all units of the textbook *Functions of English* (1976) were initiated by a male. In verifying this, Jane Sunderland found also that seven of the fifteen dialogues were between either two or three men, and the remaining eight between and man and a woman. There were no dialogues between women only (see Table 1 below).

Unit	Male characters	Female characters	Who starts in mixed-sex dialogues?
1	John	Sally	John
2	Guy Roy		N/A
3	Guy	Sally	Guy
4	Guy John		N/A
5	Ken John Guy		N/A
6	John Guy		N/A
7	Michael	Sally	Michael
8	Michael	Sue	Michael
9	Ken	Sue	Ken
10	John Guy		N/A
11	Ken	Sue	Ken
12	Guy	Sue	Guy
13	Ken John		N/A
14	John Ken		N/A
15	Guy	Sue	G

Table 1: Characters and 'firstness' by gender in dialogues of *Functions of English*

Pedagogical and Cognitive Implications of Gender Imbalance in Textbook Dialogues

When an analysis of textbook dialogues shows that there are imbalances between the roles of females and those of males, the question that one then needs to ask is whether these imbalances matter. What *pedagogic* implications are there for teachers, and for female and male learners?

We have above identified five possible roles of textbook dialogues in language teaching and the learning purposes served. We will now briefly suggest how gender imbalances in dialogues may defeat these purposes and thus what influence they may have on classroom goals generally.

To begin with, in mixed-sex classes of equal numbers of males and females, when a disproportionate number of roles and thus a disproportionate amount of speech is allocated to the sexes so that one sex has fewer words than the other in dialogues, the 'silenced sex' will have poorer practice opportunities in playing their roles as dialogue participants. Secondly, if one sex *initiates* conversation more often than the other, the 'initiating sex' will end up having more active practice in the skill of initiating conversation. The relationship between language output and language acquisition is unclear: Merill Swain (1985) suggests different roles for output; Dick Allwright and Kathleen Bailey are less convinced, arguing that some learners will learn best by listening (1991: 150). But while the jury is still out, it would seem safest to ensure that output *opportunities* are available for everyone, perhaps especially for very specific social/linguistic skills such as 'initiating conversation'.

Further practice opportunities can be speculated on here - and could indeed be explored. For example, gender imbalance in textbook dialogues may affect learner behaviour in other classroom activities like simulation and dramatisation. When students are asked to dramatise a text or make a simulation of it, because of the authority afforded textbooks, they are likely to imitate the original text. As Bessie Dendrinos (1992: 26) observes:

> The textbook carries a unique authority which is created and maintained through its texts.... these are understood as the legitimate version of a society's sound knowledge -- the knowledge that every pupil has a primary responsibility to master.

Frequent and regular gender imbalances in dialogue roles may thus predispose students to make assumptions about the gendered nature of verbal behaviour of native speakers of the second or foreign language, and they may accordingly continue to imitate it in class - probably to the disadvantage of the female students. Male and female students alike may be further misled to the point where they formulate particular, gender-imbalanced assumptions about when and how much they should speak *outside* the classroom.

A negative *cognitive* influence, as indicated earlier, may be loss of interest on the part of those who are discoursally marginalised. As suggested by the writers of *On Balance* (1991), female students may be consciously or unconsciously influenced to the point where they become demotivated as they continue to role-play roles which are restricted linguistically - as well as, often, occupationally. This marginalisation may in turn shape these female students' *expectations* of disempowered roles. Such possible influences deserve and require further investigation.

Our Study

Given the existing gender stereotyping in language textbooks, about which there is a large empirical body of knowledge, and the gender bias in textbook dialogues, about which there is a very small empirical body of knowledge (ETHEL, 1980; Poulou, 1994), we had to decide whether to look at dialogues in older, more studied textbooks, and thus complement the existing studies of stereotyping, or dialogues in more recent textbooks, of which there have been fewer studies as regards gender bias. We decided on the latter simply because the more recent books are those not only in current but also in near-future use.

The purpose of our study was to thus establish whether and to what extent gender bias in dialogues obtained in three recent, popular (and thus hopefully reasonably representative) English language textbooks. We also decided to do a quantitative rather than qualitative study, seeing this as a starting point which a follow-up qualitative study could use as baseline data. We however recognise that qualitative and quantitative studies may reveal different manifestations of gender bias.

We decided to look at dialogues intended to be *spoken*. If 'male firstness' and male verbal dominance are present, dialogues intended only for listening may inculcate these ideas, but dialogues which are to be spoken, in addition to this,

are actively *promoting* this verbal practice in female and male students through the students' own discourse practices.

Textbooks Analysed

The three textbooks we chose to analyse were *Headway Intermediate* (1987), *Hotline Intermediate* (1993) and *Look Ahead 2* (1994). Our reasons for this selection were that all were recent, all were well-known, all contained dialogues, and all were for intermediate or pre-intermediate students who could be expected to deal with reasonably 'rich' dialogues. All three were borrowed from the Resources Centre of Lancaster University's Institute for English Language Education (IELE); they could thus be expected to be found in and used by students and teachers of English at similar units.

Headway Intermediate

The *Headway* series is authored by John and Liz Soars and published by Oxford University Press. It is an English revision and extension course intended for adults at the intermediate stage. *Headway Intermediate* is part one of the course. It does not have a particular storyline, rather it has 14 different teaching units each covering all four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, in that order.

There is at least one oral fluency activity per unit. Half of these are role plays in which the students have to think about the roles they should play and then write out their parts. The other half of the speaking activities are discussions. The authors write

> The advantage of role plays is that in theory, even the quiet students participate, whereas a discussion can be dominated by one or two vociferous students (p. vii)

The dialogues themselves are self-contained and related to the topic of the unit in which they occur.

Hotline Intermediate

Hotline, by Tom Hutchinson and also published by Oxford University Press, is a series of three books from beginner to intermediate level. *Hotline Intermediate* includes dialogues to be used for both listening and speaking practice. The storyline, focusing on the activities of a group of teenage friends, is in fact carried by the dialogues.

Very often a dialogue forms part of the Language Work section in each unit, focusing on the language structures introduced. Students are encouraged to look at the picture story, work out the grammar rules by themselves, discuss the rules, listen to the dialogue, and then practise the language orally. The focus is on 'useful expressions', including colloquial expressions such as *loads of* and *they'll rip you off*. The students are encouraged to think about expressions with similar meanings to these, then read out the dialogues in pairs or groups. In the Teacher's book there is however no specific discussion of dialogues.

Look Ahead 2

Written by Andy Hopkins and Jocelyn Potter, and described as a partnership between BBC English, the British Council, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and Longman ELT, with the co-operation of the Council of Europe, *Look Ahead* is a series of four books from beginner to First Certificate level. *Look Ahead 2* is for post-elementary/pre-intermediate students, and describes itself as taking students 'beyond the Council of Europe Waystage level'.

The dialogues are intended as a way to present new language in context, and to provide both listening practice and speaking practice. The storyline, about developments at an advertising agency, is carried via the dialogues (though not all the dialogues are concerned with this storyline). The Teacher's Book's suggestions for working with dialogues (p. 9) include

> "(4) Ask students to read the dialogue in pairs and then to change roles
> (5) With their books closed, pairs of students act out the dialogue, using their own words to supplement the lines that they remember."

Though this is not made explicit, the first of these permits both members of mixed-sex pairs to have a turn at the part which provides the better language learning opportunity, if either does; the second allows for student subversion of any gender-biased roles (it also, of course, allows for a consolidation of them).

In none of the three textbooks nor the accompanying Teacher's Books is there any explicit mention of gender-fairness either in use of the books or in classroom interaction in general. (This theoretical gender-blindness is characteristic of foreign language learning materials in general; it may not, however, be an indicator of gender bias in the materials themselves.)

Selection of Data and Methodology

The data for the study consisted of all the dialogues to be used for speaking practice in all three books: 10 in *Headway*, 26 in *Hotline*, and 15 in *Look Ahead*. The gapped dialogues in *Look Ahead* were excluded, as were those in the 'Progress Check' sections, since these were clearly intended for individual writing practice.

Our methodology was quantitative: we counted the number of males and females who played roles in the dialogues[2], the number of times females and males initiated dialogues, the number of turns taken by male and by female characters, and the number of words spoken by females and by males[3].

In counting the females and females who played roles in the dialogues, we distinguished between (a) characters as individuals, and (b) the number of times each character appeared, using the distinction in linguistics between 'type' and 'token'. In this distinction, 'type' refers to a class of items and 'token' to a member of that class: *hello* thus being a token of the type 'greeting'. In our simplified version of the distinction, 'type' referred to a particular character, 'token' to an occurrence of this character. For example, 'Richard' as a 'type' counts as **one** (in this case, one male character), regardless of his number of appearances, but Richard as a 'token' is the **total number of appearances** of Richard in the text. (This use of the distinction was adopted by David Crystal (1986) in counting the words produced by young children.) The use of this distinction meant that it was possible to obtain more than one measure for each issue.

The actual research questions are listed below.

Research Questions

For each book:

1a. How many different male and female characters are there? ('types')
1b. How many appearances of the different male and female characters are there? ('tokens')
1c. What is the average (mean) number of times female and male characters appear ('mean type appearance')?
2. How many mixed-sex dialogues are initiated by male and how many by female speakers?
3a. How many male turns and female turns are there altogether?
3b. What is the average (mean) number of turns per man-'type' and per woman-'type'?
3c. What is the average (mean) number of turns per man-'token' and per woman-'token'?
4a. How many dialogue words are spoken by male and by female characters?
4b. What is the average (mean) number of dialogue words per man-'type' and per woman-'type'?
4c. What is the average (mean) number of words per man-'token' and per woman-'token'?

Our methodology did not thus have a qualitative aspect. Had time permitted, it would have been interesting and perhaps revealing to look at the language functions used by male and female characters to see if differences pertained (see Poulou, 1994).

Findings

The findings for the different research questions for each book are indicated in the following charts. (Findings for each unit of each book can be found in the Appendix.)

1a. How many different female and male characters ('types') are there?

Book	No. of different female characters	No. of different male characters
Hotline	5	5
Headway	13	9
Look Ahead	11	6

1b. How many appearances ('tokens') of the different female and male characters are there?

Book	No. of female appearances	No. of male appearances
Hotline	35	39
Headway	13	9
Look Ahead	20	10

1c. What is the mean number of appearances of female and male characters ('mean type appearance')

Book	Mean female type appearance	Mean male type appearance
Hotline	7	7.8
Headway	1.00	1.00
Look Ahead	1.82	1.67

2. How many mixed-sex dialogues are initiated by females and how many by males?

Book	No. of dialogues initiated by females	No. of dialogues initiated by males
Hotline	11	15
Headway	5	4
Look Ahead	6	3

3a. How many female turns and how many male turns are there?

Book	No. of female turns	No. of male turns
Hotline	133	142
Headway	43	27
Look Ahead	67	44

3b. What is the mean number of turns per woman -'type' and man -'type'?

Book	Mean no. of turns per woman 'type'	Mean no. of turns per man 'type'
Hotline	26.6	28.4
Headway	3.30	3.00
Look Ahead	6.09	7.33

3c. What is the mean number of turns per woman-'token' and per man-'token'?

Book	Mean no. of turns per woman-'token'	Mean no. of turns per man-'token'
Hotline	3.8	3.6
Headway	3.30	3.00
Look Ahead	3.35	4.40

4a . How many dialogue-words are spoken by women and how many by men?

Book	Dialogue words spoken by women	Dialogue words spoken by men
Hotline	2242	2481
Headway	302	248
Look Ahead	632	501

4b. What is the mean number of dialogue words per woman-'type' and per man-'type'?

Book	Mean no. of dialogue words spoken per woman-'type'	Mean no. of dialogue words spoken per man-'type'
Hotline	448.4	496.2
Headway	23.23	27.55
Look Ahead	57.45	83.50

4c. What is the mean number of dialogue words per woman-'token' and per man-'token'?

Book	Mean no. of dialogue words spoken per woman-'token'	Mean no. of dialogue words spoken per man-'token'
Hotline	64.05	63.61
Headway	23.23	27.55
Look Ahead	31.60	50.10

Summary of Findings

Hotline

As regards visibility, there was an equal number of female and male characters (five) in the textbook as a whole ('type'), and only a slight difference between female and male 'tokens' (35 female, 39 male). The difference in 'mean type occurrence' for each sex was thus also small: 7 female, 7.8 male.

However, there were three gender imbalances which, even though not highly marked, are worth mentioning:

(1) more dialogues were initiated by males than by females (15 to 11).

(2) female characters spoke slightly fewer words: 2242 vs. 2481 (448.4 per woman-'type', 496.2 per man-'type'; 64.05 per woman-'token' and 63.61 per man-'token')

(3) male characters had slightly more turns in dialogues (142 : 133), the average number of turns per man-'type' and per woman-'type' being 28.4 : 26.6. Female 'tokens' however scored slightly better as regards their average number of turns (3.8 : 3.6).

Overall, then, *Hotline* presents a relatively progressive picture of female characters (in this case mainly girls), both in terms of visibility and of discourse. Male characters did consistently better on all variables except two,

but only very slightly. For the variables the females did better on - 'mean number of turns per woman-token', and 'mean number of dialogue words per woman-token' - the differences were also extremely slight.

Headway

As regards visibility, there were thirteen male and nine female 'types', and the same number of male and female 'tokens'. The 'mean type appearance' for both was thus the same, i.e. 1.

Unsurprisingly, considering the greater number of females, there were fewer male turns (27) as compared to those of females (43) and females did better on 'average no. of turns' for both 'type' and 'token' (for both the ratio was 3.3:3.00) . Females had the greater total number of words (302), as compared to that of the males who had 248. The average number of words spoken by woman-'types' and 'tokens' was however 29.22, whereas that for men-'types' and 'tokens' was 27.55.

Males initiated four dialogues, females five.

Our analysis of the dialogues for speaking practice as found in *Headway* showed differences between males and females in visibility, there being more females, who also initiated conversation marginally more often, but individual males being ahead as regards verbosity.

Look Ahead

Look Ahead was in some ways comparable. There were eleven different female characters, and only six males. A 'woman-type' appeared on average 1.82 times; a 'man-type' 1.67 times. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, women initiated six of the nine mixed-sex dialogues, took sixty-seven turns compared with the males' forty-four, and spoke 632 dialogue words compared with the men's 501.

Though the women in *Look Ahead* are thus very visible as 'types' and in their combined verbal production, as individuals they do not do so well linguistically. As regards the 'density' of dialogue speech of the individual males, the men are rather more verbally visible: each woman-'type' has on average 6.09 turns and each man-'type' 7.33 turns. Each woman-token has 3.35

turns on average, and each 'man-'token' 4.40. The difference in mean number of dialogue words is more marked: the mean number of dialogue words spoken by a woman-'type' is 57.45 and by a man-'type' 83.50; the mean number of dialogue words spoken by each woman-'token' is 31.60, and by each man-'token' 50.10. Though there are fewer male characters in these dialogues, then, they are thus clearly better developed linguistically as individuals than are the females.

Analysis of Findings

The gender differences found are too small either way to be significant. This is encouraging - but it would be interesting to establish *why* the differences were small.

The reason for the relative gender balance in these *discourse roles* may lie in the distribution of *occupational and social roles*. A discoursal gender imbalance could be largely because the roles allocated male and female characters are those which imply relative verbosity or relative silence, respectively, or, as in Poulou's study (1994), 'expertness' or 'non-expertness'. As William O'Barr and Bowman Atkins (1980) found, when looking at actual language use in the courtroom, power as well as gender was a factor in the amount of speech used. In the same way if all textbook female characters are secretaries and all male characters line managers, it would perhaps not be surprising if the men spoke more - but that would be because they were line managers, not because they were men. It is therefore worth looking at the occupational and social roles in the dialogues in these three books to see if gender balance has been achieved here. The actual occupational and social roles by gender for each book, with frequencies ('tokens'), are given in Table 5 below:

Book	No. of female role appearances	No. of male role appearances
Hotline	sister x 3 friend x 29 saleswoman x 1 'rivals' (for Vince!) x 2 girlfriend x 2	brother x 2 friend x 32 customer x 1 boyfriend x 1 manager x 1 son x 1 father x 1
Headway	partner x 2 [domestic] worker x1 mother x 1 daughter x 1 interviewer x 1 girlfriend x 1 co-traveller x 2 acquaintance x 2 citizen x 1 colleague x 1	partner x 2 worker x 1 interviewee x 1 officer x 1 acquaintance x 2 policeman x 1 colleague x 1
Look Ahead	friend x 7 secretary x 1 accounts manager x 1 colleague x 2 driver x 2 warden x 2 sister x 1 girlfriend x 2	friend x 3 colleague x 2 visitor on business x 1 porter x 1 brother x 1 boyfriend x 2

Table 5: Occupational and social roles, by gender, with frequencies, of each of the three textbooks

The number of *different* occupational and social roles ('types') in the three books are given in Table 6 below:

Book	No. of different female roles	No. of different male roles
Hotline	5	7
Headway	10	7
Look Ahead	8	6

Table 6: The number of different occupational and social roles, by gender, for each of the three textbooks

With the possible exception of the one male manager in *Hotline*, and the two family roles in *Headway*, the occupational and social roles seem fairly distributed between female and male characters - in contrast with the findings of earlier 'Content Analysis' studies of language textbooks - and neither females nor males seem to have a much greater *range* of roles. This may be relevant. It may be that one way to ensure gender fairness in discourse in *dialogue roles* is to ensure a fair gendered distribution of *occupational and social roles*.

Discussion of Findings

Though we are aware that a qualitative analysis may have revealed more subtle and pernicious gender biases (cf. David Carroll and Johanna Kowitz, 1994; Julia Glass, forthcoming), the findings of this *quantitative* investigation were largely very positive. We are of course pleased about this - gender imbalance and the tendency to 'think male' is clearly something that can be avoided, given a little thought, some counting, an awareness of the 'think male' tendency and a shared intention of the textbook writer and the publisher not to fall into the same trap, and probably a concern for fairly distributed social and occupational roles. The results of our analysis suggest that these authors and publishers indeed gave (considerable?) consideration to social roles, language use and gender.

Our findings would seem to reflect a current awareness in the world of language teaching and perhaps in society at large for gender-fairness. In the world of language textbook production this awareness is now actively encouraged by Women in EFL Materials' document *On Balance: Guidelines for Materials Writers in EFL* (1991) (of which all British ELT publishers now have a copy), which does in fact make reference to counting characters in dialogues (p. 3), and to both men and women starting dialogues (p. 4). The publishers' objective is of course to sell books, but if counting female and male heads will help achieve this, then sales will not be put at risk. Customers are unlikely to *object* to the idea of gender balance, after all (though those accustomed to seeing a preponderance of males as 'normal' may perceive such balance as a preponderance of females!)

It would seem important, methodologically, to use different measures when quantitatively assessing the extent of gender balance and imbalance. As we

have shown, visibility in one sense does not mean visibility in all: there may be many female characters but who are not presented in any 'discoursal depth', for example, because they each appear only once. Women characters may exemplify large numbers of words but may have few turns or may rarely speak first. The sheer numbers of different women in *Look Ahead* and the total number of words they speak for example is thus not a good indicator of gendered verbal visibility of *individuals*. The number of words spoken by women may be a rather crude measure of learning opportunities if this is not paralleled by the presence of individual female characters whose 'verbal depth' equals that of their male counterparts. In order to achieve equal language practice opportunities for both male and female students in dialogues, all measures need to be considered. Sexism, after all, can be very pernicious, and can pop up where it is least expected and where it is hard to identify.

The issue of how to achieve gender balance in discourse roles remains a problematic one. One way may indeed be through ensuring gender balance not only in the number of female and male characters but also in their social and occupational roles - as was apparently done in the three textbooks studied here. The question then is one of credibility with textbook users, which will obviously vary with culture. The theoretical alternative - that of ensuring gender balance in discourse roles but not social and occupational roles is likely however to lack validity, since people in the more subservient occupational roles, at least, are unlikely to speak as much as their 'superiors'. A logical way out would be to include characters of the same status throughout the book, say, a group of factory workers, or fifth form students - but this would inevitably mean difficult restrictions on any story line. Gender balance in discourse roles, and hence in language practice opportunities, may thus be achievable, one way or another, but at a possible cost.

The Ideal Situation

Up to now the desirability of balancing discourse roles equally between female and male characters has been seen as a 'given'. This view however perhaps requires further support. Let us take a step back, and ask 'naively', "What *should* the distribution of gender roles in language textbook dialogues be like?" And let us compare it with the situation with occupational roles.

The claim has been made that occupational roles in a given textbook are often worse for women than they actually are in the society in which the textbook is

used or on which it is based (e.g. Kata Ittzes, 1978). Two possible publishers' and authors' professional responses to this are:

(a) attempting to make textbook occupational roles for women and men mirror those of the society

(b) having 'positive role models' in textbooks, to the extent that women are employed in a wider range and at higher levels of professions than they actually are, perhaps to the point of balancing all roles so that there are, say, the same number of male and female managers and the same number of male and female lorry drivers.

There are valid arguments in favour of (and problems with) each, though it is not the purpose of this paper to go into these (but see Robert O'Neill, 1994). Are either of these approaches however valid when it comes to *discourse roles*?

In a relevant article entitled 'Natural conversations as a model for textbook dialogue', Carol Myers Scotton and Janice Bernsten (1988) argue for a closer relationship between natural conversations and textbook dialogues. However, although in their empirical investigations they uncovered gender differences (some significant) in different aspects of direction giving, along with other differences, they stop short of explicitly saying these should be reflected in dialogues, contenting themselves rather with the bland "all professionals involved in second language instruction should pay more attention to quantitative data from natural conversations to find out what they are really like" (1988: 383).

In an earlier article, entitled 'The problem of applying sociolinguistic findings to TESOL: the case of male/female language', Elliot Judd (1983) however apparently accepts the *discoursal* equivalent of response (a) (above) without question. Starting with the 'given' that "It is now a widely accepted principle that language materials should be based on models that represent valid linguistic data", he then goes on to explore ways of gathering data on gender differences in language use, and of incorporating this into language teaching materials. He never questions the desirability of this - though he is aware of research findings in the area of gender differences in language use, and of the debate over whether gender differences are in fact reflections of differences in power:

> [A] crucial factor which must be incorporated into language materials when they are designed to include male/female variations is that of the status relationships between the participants. Many of the differences between female and male language use have been attributed to an unequal power relationship between women and men in our society (Spender 1980, Kramarae 1981; and McConnell-Ginet, Borker and Furman, 1980). In fact, some have argued that most gender differences in English occur because of status inequalities rather than sex alone. Of course, since women are generally in lower-status positions, linguistic differences caused by lower status are more apparent in most women's speech than in men's (O'Barr and Atkins, 1980). *Thus this factor must necessarily be reflected if valid language models for men and women are desired.* (our italics)

Two key words here are 'if' and 'valid'. While it may or may not be desirable for a textbook to mirror occupational roles as regards gender, to mirror the quantitative aspects of *discourse* roles has a clear identifiable potential to disadvantage female learners in terms of unequal provision of language practice opportunities. Much research into gender differences in language use has found that, in mixed-sex conversation in many contexts, men talk more than women, who expend a great deal of energy asking questions, taking up the men's topics, and providing conversational support in terms of 'backchannelling': *mm hm, really*, and so on (e.g. Pamela Fishman, 1983). This has not only found to be true of speakers of English as a first language, but also of adult learners of English as a second language doing groupwork in the classroom (Janet Holmes, 1994; Fran Munro, 1987; Suzanne Gass and Evangeline Varonis, 1986). To mirror such findings would not only provide female students with fewer speaking practice opportunities than males, but would also give them practice in 'supportive' rather than 'assertive' language use.

Judd's suggestion has other weaknesses. Work on gender differences in language use has also uncovered *qualitative* pragmatic differences in, for example, asking for help and apologising. Most apologies seem to be from women to other women, fewest from men to men (Holmes, 1988). Should findings such as these be replicated in language textbooks? Frequency is never the whole story: in the case of compliments to women by men, there is often a fine line between a 'sincere' or disinterested compliment, interested flattery, and verbal sexual harassment. Recognition of this, for both female and male students, together with recognition that what may be sincerely intended as a compliment may not be so perceived, would seem far more important than

mechanically reflecting questionably generalisable findings of frequencies in language textbook dialogues.

Rather than uncritically mirror gender differences in language use, it is surely fairer if textbook dialogues provide comparable models and thus comparable speaking opportunities, and in addition *inform* students of empirically established gender differences. There are problems with *this*, of course. One is the questionable generalisability of findings in the area of gender differences in language use and the important fact that these differences are not *fixed*. Another (which may in fact obtain whether gender roles in textbook dialogues are equivalent to those outside, or not) is that some non-native speakers of English will have sociopragmatic problems adopting those norms of English which are differently gendered from their first language norms (Jenny Thomas, 1983). Yet, despite these problems, to balance discourse roles by gender (and, if necessary, to do this by balancing occupational and social roles) would seem the safest, fairest starting point.

Textbook discourse roles must thus be differentiated in essence from occupational roles as regards gender. Occupational roles cannot be shown to have a direct influence on classroom proceedings. Discourse roles in dialogues are very likely to have a direct influence, in that in a mixed-sex class with equal numbers of males and females, as we have suggested, male roles will often go to male students, female roles to female students. We are not suggesting here that students should be forced to speak in class, or indeed that a speaking opportunity will necessarily result in language learning. But discoursal *dis*empowerment through a gender imbalance in discourse roles in dialogues surely has no role to play in language teaching.

Our conclusion echoes that reached by Geoffrey Walford in a study of illustrations in physics textbooks. Walford notes both relative invisibility of female characters and stereotypical roles for female characters, comparable to that frequently found for language textbooks. He writes:

> It could, of course, be argued that physics textbooks are just showing the world as it is, and that if there are fewer girls taking physics and fewer women in physics-related jobs, then this is exactly the way that physics textbooks should be illustrated. Such an argument would completely miss the purpose of this article. ... if we seriously wish to encourage more girls to enter physics we need to change the clear masculine image. It is recognised that a major part of this image is reflected and projected in the day-to-day activities of physics teachers in the classroom and that this is going to be

> difficult to change. But it is possible that in the area of school textbooks, steps could be taken to ensure that the image presented of physics is one which is encouraging to young people of both sexes and not just one at the expense of the other (1980: 225-6)

Walford adds that since society is moving towards greater gender equality, physics teachers should play a role in this. So, we say, should language textbook writers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Dialogues are models of oral language which through the learning/teaching process should enable all students to take part in conversations in the foreign language they are learning. If there are imbalances in dialogue participant roles to the point that discourse roles are not equally distributed between males and females, then all learners may not get equally good learning opportunities and experiences. And remembering that that output as well as input may be important in foreign or second language acquisition (Swain, 1985), for some if not all learners, this is a serious pedagogical implication which should be addressed if the aims of using dialogues in textbooks for language learning are to be achieved.

We have shown in this article that the authors and publishers of *Look Ahead*, *Headway Intermediate* and *Hotline Intermediate* have addressed the issue - or, at least, have avoided the trap their predecessors have fallen into - and we hope that these and other writers and publishers will continue in this progressive vein.

We hope too that other teachers and researchers in the field will carry out other, similar investigations, perhaps replicating our methodology with their own textbooks. In particular, we hope that investigations will be carried out into qualitative aspects of textbooks dialogues, especially the speech acts exemplified by women and men, boys and girls. We recognise that the very notion of 'speech act' is highly problematic - but 'functional' labels such as 'requesting' and 'inviting' are often used in language textbooks, and position students as users of such discourse. Who is inviting and who accepting (or declining), for example? Interviews with authors and publishers about their intentions as regards textbook dialogues would be illustrative - and interviews with the authors of the three textbooks analysed here are currently being planned. Interviews with the student users of dialogues are likely to be fruitful

too. A final plea is for studies of how mixed-sex dialogues in textbooks are actually *used* in mixed-sex language classrooms: do teachers tend to allocate female roles to female students, and male roles to male students, or are teachers prepared to vary the distribution of the part labelled 'John' and that labelled 'Sally'? And, given a very gendered dialogue and an instruction to read it aloud and/or extend it in oral pairwork, what do mixed sex - or, indeed, single sex - pairs of students actually *do* with it?

It would also be interesting to see if gender imbalances in language textbook dialogues played a role in any male domination of a language classroom (domination in the sense of the teacher paying more attention to male students, or the male students themselves speaking more than the female students). Interestingly, though such male dominance has frequently been reported (see Alison Kelly (1988) for a meta-analysis of studies), language classrooms seem to have been under-investigated in this respect.

We hope too that teacher educators in the field of language education will include discussion of gender and textbook dialogues in work on materials selection and evaluation, and will include gender-balanced dialogue writing in sessions on materials design.

Finally, we would like to express the hope that teacher-researchers looking into gender bias in language textbooks will not treat the texts and visuals as static objects in which the language and meanings are 'there', waiting to be revealed, but rather to consider both different possible interpretations on the part of different readers, and, on a more practical level, different *uses* of these texts by language teachers. And, for reasons of pure expediency (since not everyone is concerned about gender bias unless this is accompanied by a convincing answer to their 'So what?'), to relate gender bias to possible effects on students' language practice and learning opportunities, and thus potentially to their actual language *learning*.

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Thanks

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Notes

[1] A true story (personal communication)

[2] If the sex of a person was unclear from the text or from visual clues, then this person and her/his words were not included in the count. (It was not assumed, for example, that an unnamed 'mechanic' would be male - unless there was a picture of a man.)

[3] Hesitations such as *um* and *er* were included in the word counts. Contractions were taken as single words.

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Appendix: Discourse Roles in Dialogues for the Three Books

Headway Intermediate (1987)

Unit	Males	Male roles	Females	Female roles	Who starts in mixed-sex dialogues?		Male turns	Female turns	Number of male words	Number of female words
1										
2										
3										
4	man	acquaintance	woman	acquaintance	woman		2	3	10	20
5	Peter	partner	Ann	partner	Peter		3	2	32	17
6 (i)	man	worker	woman	worker	man		3	3	33	15
(ii)	policeman	policeman	old woman	citizen	old woman		5	16	62	62
(iii)	Paul	boyfriend	Anna	girlfriend	Paul		2	2	10	40
7	Mr Wigmore	interviewee	Ms. Brown	interviewer	Ms. Brown		7	8	51	77
8										
9			Mother Gill	mother daughter			N/A	4	N/A	39
10 (i)	boy	partner	girl	partner	girl		1	2	6	14
(ii)	man	colleague	woman	colleague	man		2	1	16	6
(iii)			woman woman	co-traveller co-traveller						
11	man	acquaintance	woman	acquaintance	woman		2	2	28	12
12										
13										
14										
Totals	9 tokens 9 types	9 tokens 7 types	13 tokens 13 types	13 tokens 13 types	5F	4M	27	43	248	302

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Hotline Intermediate (1993)

Unit	Males	Male roles	Females	Female roles	Who starts in mixed-sex dialogues?	Male turns	Female turns	Number of male words	Number of female words
Int_a	Vince	brother	Sue	sister	Vince	4	3	48	102
Int_b	Vince	brother	Sue and Andrea	sister and friend	Vince	3	5	17	53
Int_c	Vince	friend	Andrea	friend	Vince	8	9	187	143
1a	Vince	friend	Andrea	friend	Vince	10	11	162	106
1b	Vince and Dan	friends	Rosy Andrea Kim	friends	Rosy	5	8	96	80
2a	Vince and Terry	friends	Rosy	friend	Vince	15	9	316	82
2b	Vince	friend	Rosy	friend	Rosy	2	2	25	21
3a	Terry	friend	Rosy	friend	Rosy	3	3	49	63
3b	Terry	friend	Rosy	friend	Terry	3	3	26	75
3c	Dan Terry Vince	friends	Kim and Rosy	friends	Dan	6	3	122	74
4									
5a	Mr Scott (Vince)	customer	saleswoman	saleswoman	Saleswoman	1	1	13	34
5b	Vince and Terry	friends	Kim	friend	Kim	10	3	206	66
5c	Vince and Terry	friends	Kim	friend	Kim	2	3	34	48
6a	Terry and Vince	friends	Kim and Andrea	friends	Terry	5	4	76	60
6b	Vince and Terry	friends	Kim	friend	Kim	6	4	48	40
6c	Vince	friend	Andrea and Kim	friends/rivals	Andrea	1	3	32	19
6d	Vince	boyfriend	Kim	Vince's girlfriend	Vince	2	2	40	28
6e	Terry and Vince	friends	Andrea	friend	Terry	2	1	34	7
6f	Terry and Vince	friends			--------	2	N/A	36	N/A
7a			Kim and Rosy	friends	--------	N/A	5	N/A	116
7b	Vince and Dan	friends	Rosy and Andrea	friends	Vince	17	9	279	235
8									
9	Vince Terry Man	friends & manager	Kim	Vince's girlfriend	Vince	17	6	337	125
10a	Terry and Dan	friends	Rosy	friend	Terry	9	4	130	78
10b			Sue and Andrea	friends	--------	N/A	13	N/A	203
11a	Terry	friend	Kim and Rosy	friends	Terry	7	18	110	378
11b	Vince and Mr Sc	son and father	Sue	sister	Sue	2	1	57	5
Totals	39 tokens 5 types	39 tokens 7 types	35 tokens 5 types	35 tokens 5 types	111	1581	112	133	2481	2242

Look Ahead 2 (1994)

Unit	Males	Male roles	Females	Female roles	Who starts in mixed-sex dialogues?		Male turns	Female turns	Male words	Female words
1										
2			Rita Julia	secretary accounts manager	------		N/A	11	N/A	63
3a	James	colleague	Julia	colleague	Julia		3	3	45	52
3b	Marco	friend	Teresa	friend	Marco		4	4	48	21
4										
5a			Rita Warden	driver warden	-------		N/A	5	N/A	36
5b			Rita Warden	driver warden			N/A	3	N/A	43
7										
6	Karl Porter	visitor on business porter			-------		10	N/A	94	N/A
8			Asst Teresa		Asst		N/A	5	N/A	30
9										
10	James	brother	Rosie	sister	Rosie		7	8	43	49
11a	Bob	boyfriend	Penny	girlfriend	Bob		4	3	23	31
11b	Marco	friend	Teresa	friend	Teresa		5	5	60	60
12	Alan	boyfriend	Rosie	girlfriend	Alan		7	6	116	39
13a	Marco	friend	Becky	friend	Becky		3	3	64	21
13b			Sally Lucy	friend friend	--------		N/A	5	N/A	47
14	James	colleague	Rita	colleague	Rita		1	2	8	28
15			Julia Anna	friend friend	--------		N/A	4	N/A	112
Totals	10 tokens 6 types	10 tokens 6 types	20 tokens 11 types	20 tokens 8 types	6 1	3M	44	67	501	632

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